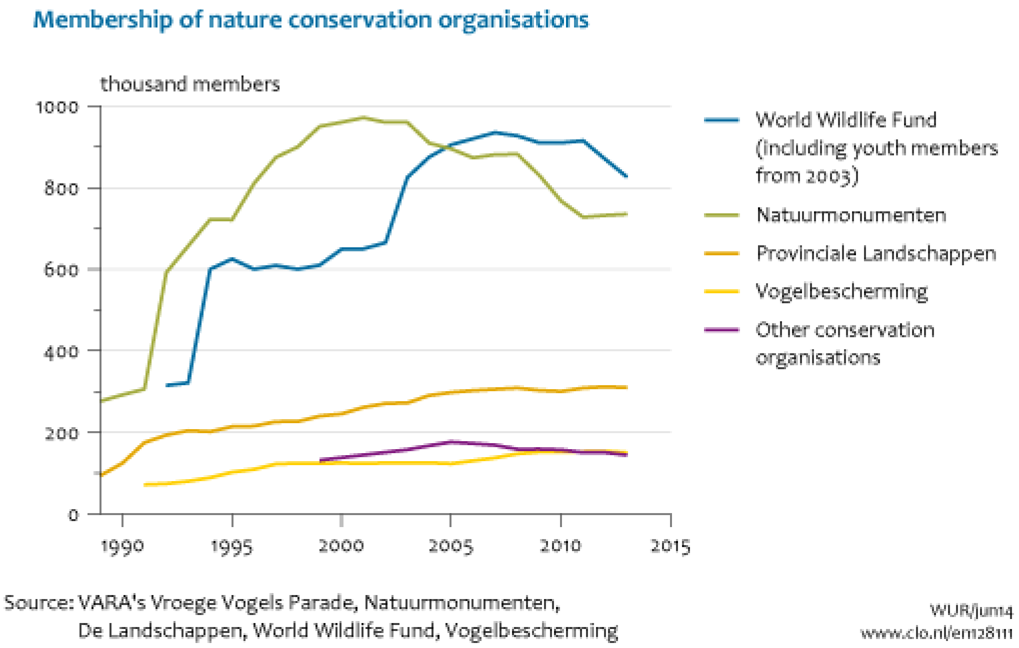
APPENDIX 2 Questionnaire Fitness Check NL 1505

Background information on questions R.4 and R.5

1. Environmental Data Compendium

Membership of Dutch private nature conservation organisations, 1989-2013

There was a considerable increase in the total membership of private nature conservation organisations between 1990 and 2012. However, the two largest organisations - the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the Society for the Preservation of Nature in the Netherlands (Vereniging Natuurmonumenten) - have seen a steady and a declining trend, respectively, in recent years. The declining Natuurmonumenten membership levelled off in 2013 for the first time in years, while membership of WWF showed a slight drop.



Role of nature conservation organisations

Private nature conservation organisations play a major role in managing nature reserves and in raising the profile of nature conservation in the Netherlands. It appears that safeguarding nature through acquisition and conservation has the biggest appeal for the general public, as the three organisations focusing on this together account for 86% of the membership of nature-related organisations. *Natuurmonumenten* and the provincial countryside associations *(Provinciale Landschappen)* focus on the acquisition and conservation of natural areas in the Netherlands, while the World Wildlife Fund focuses on the preservation of nature on a global scale.

Membership in 2013

Natuurmonumenten and WWF received financial contributions from 10% and 11% of Dutch households, respectively, while Greenpeace came a solid third with 6%. *Provinciale Landschappen* received contributions from over 4% of Dutch households in 2013. All the nature, environmental and animal protection organisations together had over 3.7 million members in 2012. The organisations that focus mainly on nature, 43 of which are included in this study, had more members than the organisations that focus mainly on the environment (14, Greenpeace being the largest) or animal welfare (22 organisations, the largest being the Dutch Society for the Protection of Animals (*Dierenbescherming)* and the International Fund for Animal Welfare, IFAW).

Membership trends

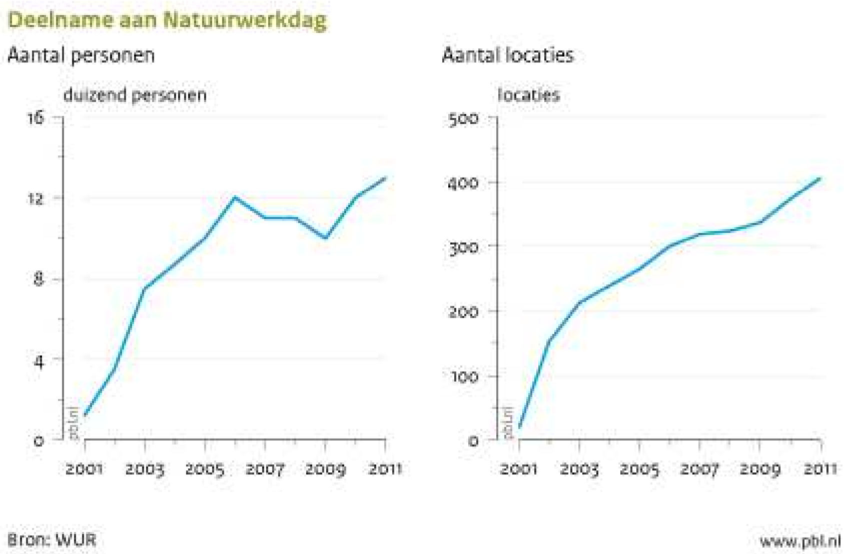
Membership of the larger nature conservation organisations grew considerably in the 1990s, but this started to change in 2000. Between 2002 and 2011, there was a decline in the membership of *Natuurmonumenten*, and the

WWF currently has the most members. Membership of *Natuurmonumenten* did not fall any further in 2012. WWF membership remained stable after 2006 at just above 900,000, but dropped in 2012 to about 870,000. By contrast, membership of the Dutch bird protection organisation *Vogelbescherming* remained fairly constant after the 1990s, and even increased in recent years. Membership of *Provinciale Landschappen* also increased slightly after 1990.

2. Assessment of the Human Environment 2012

Graph: Participation in 'nature working day' (a fixed day in the year on which everybody is invited by nature conservation organisations to lend a helping hand for nature management)

Left graph: number of persons participating; graph on the right: number of locations



[Participation in Nature Working Day]
[Number of participants]
[a thousand people]
[Number of locations]
[locations]

3. Assessment of the Human Environment 2014

The Dutch consider nature conservation important, as long as it doesn't affect the economy too much.

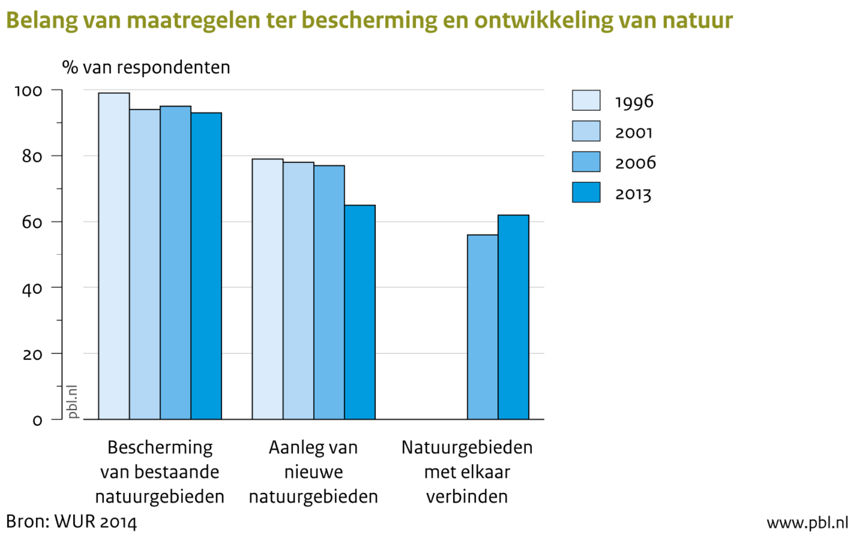
Almost all Dutch people find it important that existing nature reserves are protected. Almost 75% of the population considers the decline of nature a big to major problem. The government takes measures to halt the decline. The majority of Dutch people consider these measures important, although a growing number of people also think that nature should not affect the economy.

Graph: What people think of measures to protect nature

First group of diagrams: protecting nature reserves

Second group: developing new nature reserves

Third group: connecting nature reserves



[Importance of measures to protect and develop nature]

[% of respondents]

[Protection of existing nature reserves]

[Construction of new nature reserves]

[Connect nature reserves with one another]

[Source: Wageningen University and Research Centre 2014]

Measures protecting nature are considered important

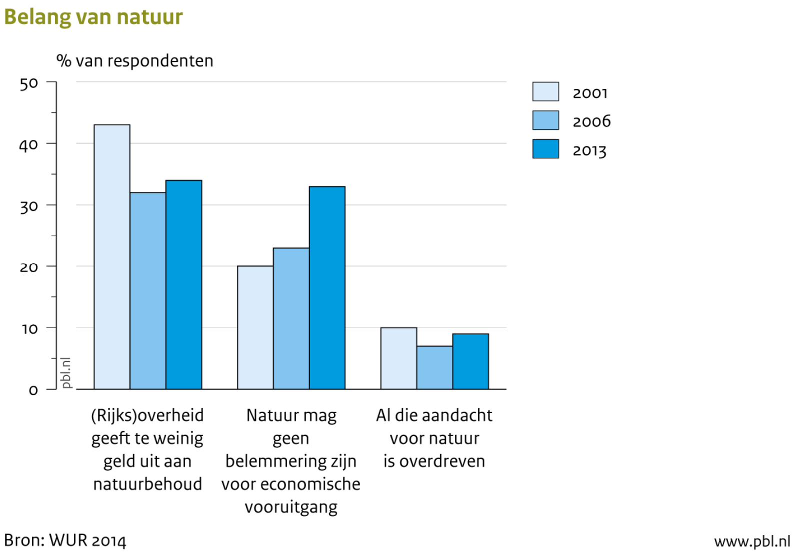
A large majority of Dutch people find the protection of existing nature reserves and rare flora and fauna to be important measures. This does however not automatically mean that an equal percentage is positive about government policy measures to protect nature. To stop the loss of biodiversity, the government is active in realising the National Nature Network, constructing new nature and connecting nature reserves with one another. The support for the construction of new nature reserves decreased in 2013, while the support for connecting nature reserves saw an increase. These days people find connecting almost as important as the construction of new nature reserves. A majority of Dutch people still consider the realisation of the Nature Network important.

Graph: The importance of nature (% of respondents agreeing with statement)

First group of diagrams: “The (central) government spends too little on nature conservation”

Second group: “Nature cannot be an obstacle to economic development”

Third group: “All the attention for nature is exaggerated”



[The importance of nature]

[% of respondents]

[Government funding for nature conservation is too low]

[Nature should not be a barrier for economic development]

[All the attention for nature is exaggerated]

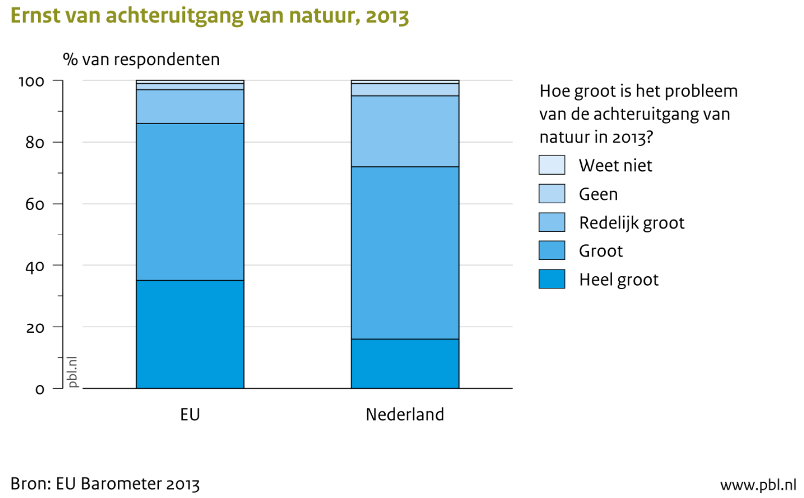
[Source: Wageningen University and Research Centre 2014]

A growing number of Dutch people thinks that nature should not affect economic development

Since 2006, the ideas about the importance of nature have changed very little, with the exception of the view on the position that nature should not affect economic development. When trying to find a balance between nature and economic interests, a third of the population thinks that nature should not affect economic development. In 2001, 43 percent of the population thought that the government provided too little funding for nature conservation. In 2006 this had fallen to 32 per cent and in 2013 this percentage remained more or less stable (34 per cent). The number of people that find the attention for nature exaggerated has been a small but stable group since 2001. A majority of the Dutch people consider the decline in nature a big problem. Still, the Dutch public considers the decline in nature less of a problem than other Europeans. Of all European countries, a third of the public considers the decline in nature a big problem, while only 16 percent of the Dutch public consider this a big problem.

Graph: How people think about the decline in nature

Question: “How serious is the problem of nature decline?”
Answers rank from (light blue) “Do not know”, “No problem”, “Fairly serious”, “Serious”, (dark blue) “Very serious”. EU and Netherlands compared



[How serious is the problem of the decline in nature?]

[% of respondents]

[How big is the problem of the decline in nature in 2013?]

[Don’t know]

[No problem]

[Fairly serious]

[Serious]

[Very serious]

The Government aims for greater public involvement in nature policy

A 2013 survey into public support shows that 60 percent of Dutch people see the government as primarily responsible for nature. Many people do not think that it is self-evident that the public should take more responsibility in taking care of nature and landscape. The Ministry of Economic Affairs wants to put an end to these assumptions and aims for a policy with greater involvement of the public and organisations in taking care for nature and landscapes. The government places the energetic society at the heart of its nature policy and wants to act in line with the growing involvement of the public in nature (Government vision on nature 2014). In its vision, society itself is increasingly capable of progressing towards its targets. It therefore exercises restraint and takes on a facilitating and stimulating role.

4. T.A. de Boer, A.T. de Blaeij, B.H.M. Elands, H.C.M. de Bakker, C.S.A. van Koppen & A.E. Buijs (2014). Public support base for nature and nature policy in 2013. Wageningen, Statutory Research Tasks Unit for Nature and the Environment, Wageningen UR. WOt-rapport 126. 86 p. 14 Figs; 21 Tabs; 22 Refs; 6 annexes.

This report presents the results of the 2013 survey on the public support base for nature and nature policy, which was held among a representative group of the Dutch public. This longitudinal study shows that many citizens attach great value to nature conservation, regularly spend time in natural areas and engage in activities relating to nature and the landscape. Only a limited percentage is actively engaged in public initiatives regarding natural

areas in their residential environment. Compared to the previous edition of the survey (2006), the support for policy measures has decreased slightly; people have become more positive about the availability of natural areas in the Netherlands, and they are more likely to spend time in natural areas.

Public support survey

The Dutch government is interested in finding out to what extent the public feels involved in nature and how large the public support base for nature policy is. Since 1996, every five years a survey has been held to assess the public support base for nature and nature policy. The data for the survey are collected by means of a questionnaire presented to a representative group of the public. The 2013 public support survey focused on the current state of the public support base for nature and nature policy, the trends in this support base relative to previous editions of the survey, and the opportunities this provides for increasing the public's involvement in nature policy.

The public support base was assessed using three main indicators: mental images of nature and appreciation of the availability of natural areas, appreciation of Dutch nature policy, and involvement in nature-related activities. These indicators were used to prepare a questionnaire, which was presented to a representative group of Dutch people. The sample was based on the GfK online panel, from which a representative sample was drawn. Ultimately 1,500 respondents completed the questionnaire.

The results show that public support for nature is relatively large, as is clear from the positive results regarding the abovementioned indicators. Compared to 2006, the Dutch public has become more positive about the availability of natural areas in the Netherlands and in their own residential environment, and more people have become actively engaged in activities that benefit nature and the landscape. On the other hand, most Dutch people do not regard nature as a major policy theme, and this has not changed since 2006. Over the years, people increasingly have attached value to employment issues. In addition, support for governmental policy measures has decreased since 2006, except for measures interconnecting natural areas. Nevertheless, a large majority still considers policy measures such as protecting existing natural areas, protecting valuable flora and fauna, ecological education and increasing the amount of urban green space to be important or very important. Opinions on the importance of nature have not changed much since 2006, except for the idea that nature policy should not affect economic progress. The percentage of respondents agreeing with this statement has increased since 2001.

Despite the low priority for nature in current governmental policies, the public still sees the government as a major player in this respect. They consider the government the main party responsible for nature conservation, although they recognise that other parties, such as farmers, nature conservation organisations, the tourist industry and private citizens also share some of the responsibility for protecting nature in the Netherlands. For many Dutch people however, their shared responsibility for nature appears to be limited to wanting to be informed about plans regarding natural areas in their residential environment. As in 2006, only a small part of respondents report being closely involved in decision-making processes about natural elements in the area in which they live. About 3% of respondents report being involved in a citizens' initiative regarding nature and the landscape (as initiators, members of a consultation group or implementers). These findings suggest that the government's expectations regarding the public's participation in nature policy may be too high. The percentage of people actively involved is currently considerably lower than what is required to compensate for the decreasing role of the government.

Mental images of nature and availability of natural areas

Mental images of nature

The public's idea of what constitutes 'nature' covers a great variety of elements, including marshes and recreational areas, but also cats and dogs. This shows that Dutch people have a very broad mental image of nature, as was also clear from previous surveys. Dutch people are ambiguous about the relationship between man and nature. On the one hand, the majority thinks humans are allowed to intervene in nature, while on the other hand there is also a majority that agrees with the view that nature should be left alone. Most of the respondents prefer not to see any buildings in natural areas.

Availability of natural areas

- Eighty percent of Dutch people regard the amount of green space in their residential environment satisfactory or ample.
- Two thirds of the public regards the availability of natural areas in the Netherlands satisfactory or ample, while one third thinks the availability is insufficient.
- Respondents in large cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht) are less satisfied with the availability of natural areas, both in their own residential environment and in the Netherlands as a whole.

- The percentage of Dutch people who regard the availability of natural areas in their own residential environment and in the Netherlands as a whole satisfactory or ample has increased compared to the 2006 survey.

Appreciation of nature policy

Importance of nature

- The majority (66%) of respondents do not think that too much attention is paid to nature, and 47% think nature needs to be protected.
- One third endorse the statement that nature policy should not affect economic progress, compared to 20% in 2001.
- Dutch people do not place nature high on the list of priorities for the national government: only 19% would place it among the four most important policy areas. At the same time, 34% indicate that the national government is not spending enough on nature policy, while 38% neither agree nor disagree with this view.
- Most Dutch people would prefer to see more green spaces in their town or city, rather than more shops or housing.

Appreciation for policy measures

- Nearly all Dutch people (93%) think that existing natural areas should be protected. Other measures that are considered important by at least three quarters of the Dutch population include protecting rare plants and animals, more ecological education and more green spaces in towns and cities. The majority also regards the creation of new natural areas, interconnecting existing natural areas, more natural habitats in rural areas and the construction of more paths and benches important measures.
  Just as in previous editions of the survey, the respondents regarded protecting existing natural areas as the most important measure.
- Measures to interconnect natural areas are considered more important by the respondents in the 2013 survey than by those in 2006, whereas the creation of new natural areas, facilities for walkers (like paths and benches) and ecological education in schools are now considered less important measures.

Responsibilities of actors

- Most Dutch people regard the government as the main party responsible for nature conservation. In addition, the agricultural sector is also regarded as having to share part of the responsibility, as are citizens and nature conservation organisations.
- One third of the respondents would like to be informed about plans affecting natural areas in their residential environment, while 22% indicate that they are willing to participate in consultations about such plans. The number of respondents expressing a desire for information has decreased since the 2006 survey.

Nature-related activities

The public may be involved in nature in various ways. The report distinguishes between ‘consumers’, ‘protectors’ and ‘decision-makers’. Consumers are people who relate to nature by visiting natural areas and use information about nature. The involvement of protectors consists of activities for the benefit of nature and the landscape, donations to nature conservation and membership of conservation organisations. Decision-makers express their involvement by joining in nature protection campaigns and citizen’s initiatives and by collecting knowledge about such activities.

Citizens as ‘consumers’

- Dutch people are most likely to visit natural areas: 62% visit them regularly, compared to 55% who visit rural areas and 43% who visit urban green spaces. Twenty-three percent of respondents indicated that they never or rarely visited urban green spaces.
- Compared to the 2006 survey, Dutch people have become more likely to visit a park or natural area.
- Eighty percent of Dutch people make use of one or more sources of information to learn more about nature, television being the most important source. Compared to 2006, more people now consult the internet.

Citizens as protectors

- Over half of Dutch people are in some way actively involved in nature-related activities, such as putting up nest boxes or cleaning up refuse left by others. More people are now actively involved than in 2006.
- About 50% of Dutch people make some financial contribution to nature conservation, for instance by buying products meeting ecological criteria. In 2013, fewer people than in 2006 donated extra money to campaigns to protect nature.

Citizens as decision-makers

- One fifth of the Dutch people are involved in campaigns relating to nature and green spaces in their residential environment. The most frequent type of activity in this respect is signing petitions. Older respondents are more active in this respect than younger ones.
- Nearly 3% of the respondents are also actively involved in citizens' initiatives in consultation groups or as implementer or initiator.
- The most frequently mentioned citizens' initiatives that respondents are aware of relate to the management and maintenance of existing natural areas and green spaces, to the development and creation of new green spaces and to campaigns against man-made objects in natural areas (wind turbines, golf courses, roads, industry or houses).

Based on the degree of involvement, four categories of citizens can be distinguished: highly actively involved (11%), actively involved (16%), moderately actively involved (52%) and hardly or not actively involved (21%). Over half of the Dutch people belong to the category of moderately involved citizens. People in this category regularly spend time in nature, use several sources of information on nature, occasionally engage in activities relating to nature and the landscape, and are rarely involved in citizens' initiatives. The category of highly actively involved citizens is the smallest (11%). These people spend much time in nature, frequently engage in activities relating to nature and the landscape and also contribute financially. They are also sometimes involved in citizens' initiatives. People in the actively involved category regularly or often spend time in nature, are actively involved in nature and the landscape but are rarely involved in citizens' initiatives. One fifth of Dutch people belong to the category of 'hardly or not involved'. This group occasionally spends time in nature, but is barely, if at all, engaged in nature-related activities. The four groups do not differ very much in terms of socioeconomic characteristics. The category of highly actively involved respondents comprises more highly educated people and more people over 55, while the group of people who are hardly or not actively involved includes more immigrants from Western countries.

5. Knowledge and attitude of the Dutch public regarding the new government vision on nature. Bureau Veldkamp, Rogier van Kalmthout and Tim de Beer; September 2013 Ref.nr: V6066 / 2013

Nature is important for the wellbeing of the public

Connecting with friends and family is by far the most important condition for a good quality of life in the immediate environment for Dutch people. This is followed by nature and recreation. Almost everyone appreciates being in touch with nature, especially for future generations.
Four of every ten Dutch people contribute substantially or significantly to nature. They do this especially within their own environment, for example by cleaning up and separating waste, maintaining the garden, keeping streets clean and planting trees. Half of those not contributing to nature are prepared to do so, especially by maintaining their own environment, keeping their neighbourhoods clean and disposing of waste. One in five people considers contributing financially to nature preservation (e.g. by adopting a tree).

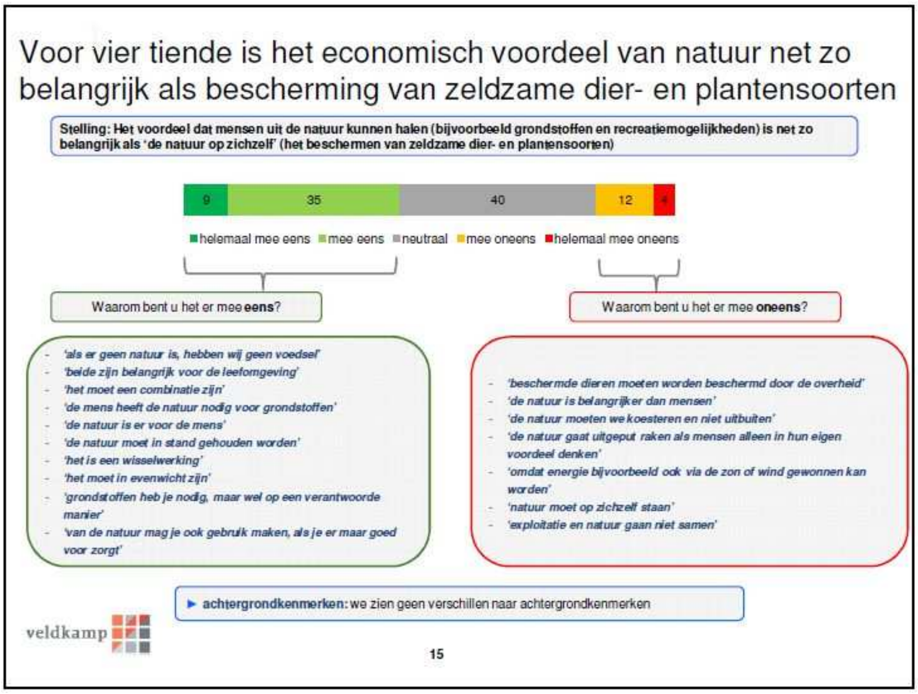
People with only basic levels of education contribute more often to nature than those with a higher education. It should be noted however that those with a higher education are more prepared: half of those not contributing to nature do mention that they are willing to do so. This is only 25% among people with a lower level of education.

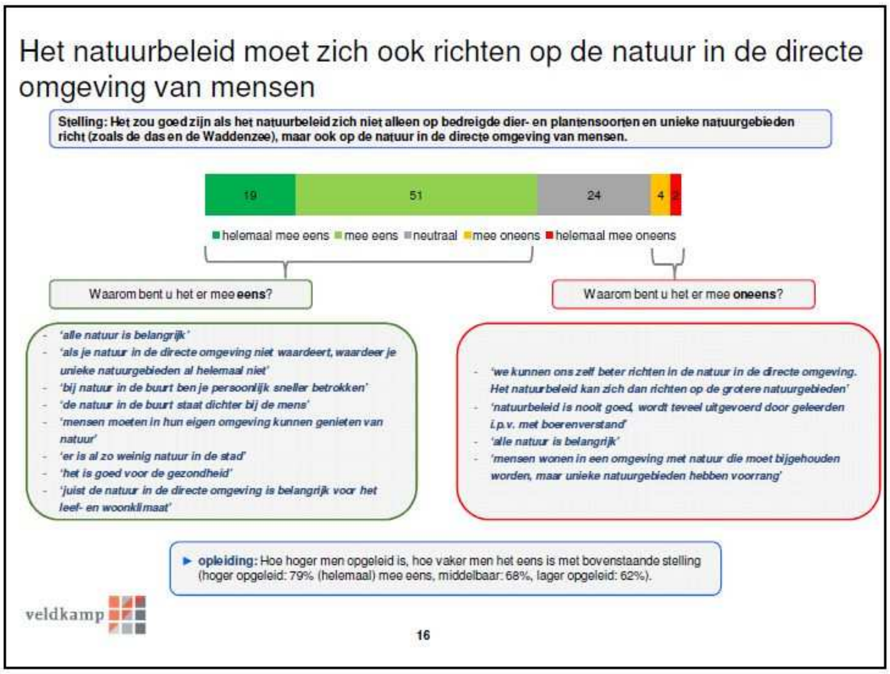
Many people are familiar with the government's nature policy and in general people are positive about it.
The government wants to give the public, businesses and societal organisations more responsibility in managing, preserving and making use of nature. Thirty per cent of the public is aware of these plans, and old people are better aware than young people.

Two thirds of the public think it is a good idea if people get more involved with nature, especially as this gives people more responsibility and because people are closer to the nature in their own environment than the government. Those who think this is a bad idea call it an austerity measure and fear that this will affect the organisational aspect, or they think that only professionals should maintain nature.
More than 50% think it is a good idea if businesses get more involved with nature. Advocates think that businesses cause pollution and therefore it is good if they can do something in return, the more so as businesses have the financial means to do this while it also creates involvement and responsibility. Opponents think that in these times of crisis, businesses need their money more than ever. Some people are afraid that businesses value their own profits above nature.

Nature policy is more than simply protecting rare animal and plant species. Many people think that nature policy should comprise more activities, for example people's immediate environment. In addition it is not only a matter

of protecting nature as we can also use nature for natural resources and recreation, as long as we find the right balance for everything. On the one hand the public thinks we are dependent upon nature (e.g. for natural resources), but on the other hand we must make sure we do not deplete these resources,.
Finding the right balance also implies finding the right balance between nature on the one hand and industry and traffic infrastructure on the other hand. Even though a third of the public think there are too many conflicting interests at stake here, there are also many people who think this should not be too much of a problem as long as the interested parties can find the right balance.





6. Council voor the Environment and Infrastructure (Rli), Nature's Imperative -Towards a robust nature policy. May 2013

In this advisory report, the Council offers recommendations for the modernisation of nature policy, with the emphasis on enhancing effectiveness and achieving even greater societal support. The proposals contained in the report address issues such as funding arrangements and ways to increase the synergy between nature and other societal objectives such as public health and flood safety.
The Netherlands' nature is changing rapidly. Some species are thriving and their numbers are increasing. This is partly the result of climate change but it is also due to human interventions such as the restoration of habitats and the release of agricultural land. At the same time however, a number of species are in ongoing decline, and we have not yet been able to implement the measures required to stop this trend.
Dutch society is also changing at a rapid pace, not in the least in terms of attitudes towards nature. A growing number of people feel a personal responsibility for the nature in their environment. Given this new setting, we must urgently seek ways to secure a sustainable future for Dutch nature. This is likely to entail exploring new arrangements for funding and governance, as well as efforts to engage the business community and the general public more closely in nature conservation and development.

(..) the Council commissioned three studies examining societal support for nature and nature policy in the Netherlands. The results offer a varied picture, depending on the indicators applied. Although there is a high level of support for nature conservation, support for current nature policy is under strain, as we can see when we take a quick look at public support, the most recent statistics on active engagement in nature management, the larger-scale public surveys, and a discourse analysis of the discussions in (social) media. (p12)

7. Arjen Buijs, Fransje Langers, Thomas Mattijssen en Irini Salverda, 2012. Draagvlak in de energieke samenleving: van acceptatie naar betrokkenheid en legitimatie. Wageningen, Alterra, Alterra-rapport 2362. 84 blz.; 21 fig.; 115 ref.

This study is concerned with the development in (public) support for nature and nature policy in the Netherlands. The author examines societal discussions over time, support for local and national nature management practice, the shift from engagement and public initiatives to self-governance, and trends in active and mental engagement (recreation and perception; landscape preferences). (Buijs et al., 2012)

There is still a lot of public support for nature and nature policy, even though the first cracks have appeared. Ninety-five percent of Dutch people consider nature conservation important. After an explosive growth between 1980 and 2006, membership of nature organisations stabilised at about four million members, although it looks like there has been a small decrease in recent years. From an international perspective, this is an unprecedented large membership.

8. Performing failure in conservation policy: The implementation of European Union directives in the Netherlands. Raoul Beunen, Kristof Van Asscheb, Martijn Duineveldc, Land Use Policy Volume 31, March 2013, Pages 280–288

It is argued that the implementation history in the Netherlands reveals that even long-standing traditions of deliberation and spatial planning can be disrupted as an unintended consequence of international policy implementation. What was intended as a tool to promote long-term planning for nature conservation can in effect undermine both nature conservation and long-term planning. Only a high degree of reflexivity in the planning system can diminish the chances of misconceiving the spaces for negotiation and deliberation that are left open by the EU directives. Otherwise, a combination of unexpected events and unreflected routine responses will in all likelihood produce results highly divergent from the initial ambitions.